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# Learning Teams at Los Alamos National Laboratory

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## DOE Operating Experience Committee

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1. Intro/Background
2. Abnormal Events
3. Learning Teams (LT)
4. Summary
5. Questions/Comments



# Learning Teams at LANL

The safety culture at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is one of continuous improvement.

- Abnormal events
- Critiques – Fact Findings (FF)
  - ✓ Critiques renamed to FF to get away from the blame stigma
- However, still an intimidation factor – FFs typically include various levels of management, ORPS, PAAA, DOE Site Reps, DNFSB, etc.

# Learning Teams at LANL

## Critiques/Fact Findings

- Who wants to speak? Remember all eyes are on you! You're on the "hot seat!"



# Learning Teams at LANL

- Various ways to perform LTs, but will focus on TA-55
- 2014 began using Learning Team (LT) concept as an alternative option (supplement) to Sub-ORPS events
- LTs do not take the place of FFs and are still required to understand, learn and improve from the event.
- The intent of LTs is to facilitate open communication and transfer information into operational feedback and improvement

# Learning Teams at LANL

What is a Learning Team (LT)?

- Another form of continuous improvement
- LTs at TA55 include people from varying organizations and backgrounds (glovebox workers, RCTs, Waste Coordinators, Craft, Industrial Hygienists, Ergo Specialist), and a Management Champion
- LT members are trained on HPI principles
- LT members are “facilitators”
- LT – try to understand event from workers’ perspective
- Workers (not managers) identify improvement opportunities and communicate to management

# Learning Teams at LANL

What is a Learning Team (LT)?

- LT has a “Chair” who helps steer the process
- LT uses a template to help guide the process
- Remember the LT may supplement FF process, but does not take the place of FF



# Learning Teams at LANL

How does a Learning Team (LT) work?

- Worker-driven
  - ✓ Setting is informal (comfortable setting)
  - ✓ Transparency is key
  - ✓ Generic questions provided prior to meeting (what went wrong, what would you do differently)
- Since workers are the ones who performed the work, they have an intimate understanding of the work being reviewed and events being assessed.

# Learning Teams at LANL

Why do Learning Teams work?

- Empowers workers! How are they empowered?
- Provides workers with a voice!
  - ✓ By listening to workers and providing them with a informal environment (no managers or oversight), they become comfortable to openly discuss the event without fear of reprisal

Process usually consists of 2-3 meetings.

1. 1<sup>st</sup> meeting – introduction (icebreaker)
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting – “learning mode,” or “soak time”
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting – follow-up and finalize

# Learning Teams at LANL

Feedback from workers – examples

- “What is the difference this time?” I’ve proposed ideas and recommendations in the past with no action taken.”
- “Hey, this (Learning Team) really works, can I join?”

Although FFs are still required – LTs are preferred (when possible) over Fact Findings

# Learning Teams at LANL

How are results shared and/or communicated?

- Via email, pre-job discussions, etc.
- Worker Safety and Security Teams
- Lessons Learned database (OPEXatLANL)

# Learning Teams at LANL

Why are Learning Teams successful?

- ✓ Support starts from the top – strong partnership between management and workers
- ✓ Each Learning Team has a Management Champion
- ✓ Worker buy-in ... TRUST
- ✓ Learning Team Reviews take on their own identity and materialize at their own pace
- ✓ Builds upon a previously established HPI foundation

# Learning Teams at LANL

Improving drum handling techniques: Implement the use of a 8-wheel caster vs. a 4-wheel caster.



# Learning Teams at LANL

## Summary:

The success of LTs is a combination of worker engagement and management commitment to improving how we perform work. It is a collaborative process that is making big difference for the workforce at LANL/TA55.

Having LTs as another tool to help investigate events, is helping to create a sustainable safety culture at LANL/TA-55. As more and more employees experience LTs, the FF process seems to also be improving. That is, workers now feel more comfortable providing input during FFs.

# Learning Teams at LANL

## Example of Fact Finding





# Learning Teams at LANL

## Example of Learning Team



# Learning Teams at LANL

## Example of Learning Team



# Learning Teams at LANL

## Questions / Comments

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*“Events can be avoided through an understanding of the reasons mistakes occur and application of the lessons learned from past events (or errors)”.*

